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La Porte Police Department beefs up fleet



By: Flori Meeks

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La Porte Police Department has added a retired military vehicle to its fleet.

The High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle is more commonly known as a HMMWV or Humvee. Department representatives obtained it at no cost through the Texas 1033 Military Surplus Program. "The HMMWV will allow us to respond better during a hurricane or flood-type weather, as a force multiplier, in responding to our citizens," LPPD Officer Tracy Phelan said.

Department officials initially envisioned the HMMWV as a transport vehicle that could not only carry bomb squad technicians and their equipment, but also tow the containment unit used to hold detonated and undetonated explosives. "It also holds the potential to serve our department's SWAT team, should there be a need for an armored response," said Sgt. John Krueger, public relations officer for the department. The vehicle is ready now for SWAT operations and will be able to respond to reports of explosives after the department adds a trailer hitch ball and mount assembly for towing, Krueger said.

Department officials applied for the vehicle earlier this year through the Texas 1033 Military Surplus Property Program. "The 1033 program is essentially an inventory of military surplus items, which are available for review by law enforcement representatives," Krueger said. Phelan, who has worked with the 1033 program in the past, is serving as the liaison between the program and the police department.

"Ideally, LPPD would love to have a BearCat-style response vehicle (Ballistic Engineered Armored Response Counter Attack Truck), but for now, the HMMWV will be of great use, should our SWAT team need the extra protection," Krueger said.

When the HMMWB arrived in La Porte in May, it needed a few upgrades and alterations to make the transition from military to police use. Community members stepped forward to donate materials and discounted services, Krueger said. The Sulzer Corp. provided metal fabrication; A & L Industrial Services offered sandblasting; and All American Sales Corp. provided emergency LED lighting at no cost. Toff Liners and Charlie Hinds Paint & Body supplied material for painting the vehicle at a reduced cost, and Jesse Ruiz volunteered to do the painting.

Not only can the vehicle be used in more than one capacity, Phelan said, but it also is drawing positive attention to the department. "The new vehicle serves as a recruiting tool for potential police officers," according to Phelan.